THE BUILDER,
NO. X.

SATURDAY, APRIL 15, 1843.

THE CARPENTERS' BENEVOLENT INSTITUTION.

If any thing were wanting to prove the necessity of a means and a system of co-operation among the building classes, we should find it in the circumstances attending the report which we give of the meeting of the above-named institution. Until almost the hour of meeting we had no notice or knowledge that such was about to be held, and then only by the purest accident. The foreman of one of our London building firms was kind enough to hurry to our office, immediately on its having come to his knowledge, to inform us. And when we consider this circumstance—the smallness of the number of the meeting—the general privacy of the business—the trifling amount of the subscriptions—and contrast them with the facts, partly stated in Mr. Tomkins' speech, as to the numbers of the body whom this institution aims to represent, their wealth and influence, and the wealth and influence which they can command—contrast them also with the effective and important workings for similar objects of other industrial bodies of our fellow-citizens, of bodies not numbering a tithe or much more of the carpenters, to say nothing of the aggregate of the whole building classes in London, who for such purposes as this ought to co-operate—when we reflect on all this, it forms matter of surprise, of astonishment, and we may add reproach, that such things can be; that with so much power of good so small an amount should be visible; and it determines us, while it confirms our every other view and purpose, to set about, with the important lever in our hands, to move this inert mass, and to wipe away the reproach that must attach to us so long as it can be said that a small committee-room in the Freemason's tavern is sufficient for the purposes of a meeting of THE LONDON CARPENTERS' BENEVOLENT INSTITUTION!!

If what we have said or can say on this topic in this sense be not enough, we can go into particulars, and shame the builders into action. We can search the records of the charitable asylums of the metropolis, and we can search other records, and it will not redound much to our credit to have to shew that, in proportion to our numbers and power, we have been negligent of the practice of those virtues, social and moral, for which almost every other class of our fellow-citizens have been distinguished. Old age and infirmity must not longer be cast out from among us, or disregarded. We are not wanting in the private exercise of the duties of humanity, as sons, parents, brothers, friends. But oh, let us consider that there are those of our body, in a number so large, who have had the misfortune to lose all these in their private circle, and let us extend to them a succouring hand, to supply, by public and general bounty, as far as lies in our power, the deficiency. Let the wanderer and the stranger—for in London there are hundreds among us whose home is far distant, or has been exchanged for the chance of one in this great metropolis, a chance in which many have not succeeded—let such as these feel that they are amongst their brethren, and do you not suffer their grey hairs to be dishonoured, or calamity and misery to fall too heavily upon them.

What is it we have engaged ourselves in? and what are the complaints we are now and then hearing, in the tone of the querulous and impatient, that we should gratify the curiosity of the inquisitive, stimulate the ardour of the student, unfold the mysteries of the craft to the unlearned—give cheap knowledge down upon the nail, and at the commencement of our enterprize? what is it we are aiming at and called upon to do? and of what avail would all these and similar labours be, if we were not awake to and sensible of the still higher functions of our office, if, on seeing this dearth of benevolent feeling in our class, we were not to bestir ourselves to draw from them, and direct into proper and sufficient channels, water from that fount of charity and mercy which so largely and plenteously exists under the rocky hardness of exterior aspects? let us not, in our wayfaring, be all mindful of advance and greedy of expectant gain, while we leave the worn-out and wearied to perish by the road-side of our journeying, or suffer the rear of our camp to be harassed and cut off by that poverty and misery which are the constant assailants of poor humanity in its progress through life. As one, we say many there are amongst us who have no friend to challenge them;—old men without sons or brothers, or brothers only in misfortune, and shall we suffer these to find an indiscriminate refuge—to depend on the charity of those whose hand supplies to the outcast, or to be thrown into the workhouse for the remnant of life, and be buried with the honours of a pauper funeral? Oh! no, it cannot be that we should be thus heartless and heedless; and it shall not be while we have a pen to indite with, or a purpose, through this paper, to promote.

But how are we to effect that good which the case calls for? not, assuredly, by carpings and objections—not by raising a question as to the fitness, or doubting the motives of those who have put a foremost hand to the wheel. We must help them. The small number of those assembled on the occasion referred to must be strengthened; their good purposes must be promoted; their slackening zeal and damped ardour re-inspired; unanimity and energy must be thrown in, and we are here to give the signal and the impulse to all which our poor ability may be equal to. We thank God that He has cast us upon this issue of events, and so disposed us in a promise of usefulness; and we call upon the whole of our esteemed fellow-craftsmen to aid us, by their information and counsel, to carry out the great objects which they, in common with ourselves, have in view.

We shall set about our task in earnestness, and from time to time, and constantly, if needs be, bring this business and all its details before the public eye—before the eye of our class. What we would know is, how much has been already done, and how; and to have it suggested to us what has been thought expedient, and probable of future accomplishment. Depend upon it, matters shall not long remain inactive in this and similar movements for good. We venture to request of those gentlemen, who to their honour have already proceeded so worthily in this business, that they would enable us to second their exertions, by putting us and our poor services at their command in any way in which they think we can be useful. That such a meeting as this should want a president, too! Honour to Mr. Ewart for the association of his name with this institution in that character; but there should be no lack of presidents and vice-presidents, noble and honourable. Let there be no squeamish or mawkish sentiment on our part, or of questioning as to party, rank, or station. Humanity, whatever a capricious world may say, has had and will have its chivalrous champions in the ranks of the educated, and those whom it has itself distinguished. Titles and distinction do not go for nothing: they have been earned in most instances, and are to be sustained by the practice of peculiar virtues. We reprobate the unworthy holder of his country's patent of approbation. We secure the brilliancy of a reputation when we throw upon its owner or conservator the responsibility of sustaining it by an active discharge of the duties of the higher paths of citizenship.

Let us beat about, therefore, for this co-operation. This is the true levelling—when high and low, the pride of the land and its humblest citizens, meet upon common ground, and for the noblest purposes. The sun of England's glory is not yet set—clouds only have obscured it; let her workmen give and demand confidence; let them respect and be respected; and above all, let us seize this opportunity to vindicate our title to all that we claim by shewing ourselves good stewards and watchful guardians of our own most precious interests.

NOTES OF AN INQUIRER.
No. I.

PUGIN'S ARCHITECTURE.

In looking over Mr. Pugin's "Principles of Pointed Architecture," I was much disappointed by the unjust and depreciatory style of his observations, and the exceedingly unfair character of many of his comparative drawings; nor—conceding to him the denunciation of many grievous departures from taste before unnoticed—do I less regret the *ad captandum* spirit of his arguments, when he attempts to exalt that style, of which he happens to be so eminent a professor, over every other, as respects its adaptation to the climate of this country, and the religion, customs, and wants of its inhabitants. It is my opinion, therefore, that I cannot commence my Notes better than by vindicating my brethren, professional and non-professional, from the sweeping censures which he has passed upon them, and demonstrate, to the best of my ability, that high art is not confined to any locality, religion, or climate, but that the spirit which animates its true professors will inevitably conduct them to the same height of excellence, although the roads which lead to it may be as different as their travellers are numerous.

It should be borne in mind that, if architectural style is to be *strictly* dependent upon every slight variation in climate, the pointed of Exeter should be less severe than the pointed of York. If cold and snow be more frequent in Northumberland than in the Isle of Wight, the gables should be more acute, the foliage less luxuriant, the apertures smaller, and the whole style of building more solid and substantial in the northern county than in the southern isle. If the principle will not bear carrying out to the farthest extreme, it is useless to attempt setting it up as a universal instead of a particular rule. That every building should be rendered weatherproof and durable, in consistency with its nature, I do not deny, but experience has shewn that these *desiderata* can be attained in the Italian as well as in the pointed style; and when the only reason for an assumed exclusive general rule is fitness or capacity of application, if that fitness and that capacity can be obtained without strict adherence to that rule, it is not and ought not to be enunciated as fixed, invariable, and never to be infringed.

We find in the northern counties of England specimens of architecture light and florid in the very highest degree, and in the south, churches and other buildings in a heavy, simple, and solid style. The advance from heaviness and simplicity to grace and ornament was simultaneous, and depended not upon the increasing mildness of the climate, but the advancing intelligence of the builders. But if the early pointed be the perfection of art, and most consistent with the severity and dampness of our frosts and fogs, the light and airy architecture of Henry the Seventh is capricious in the ex-

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